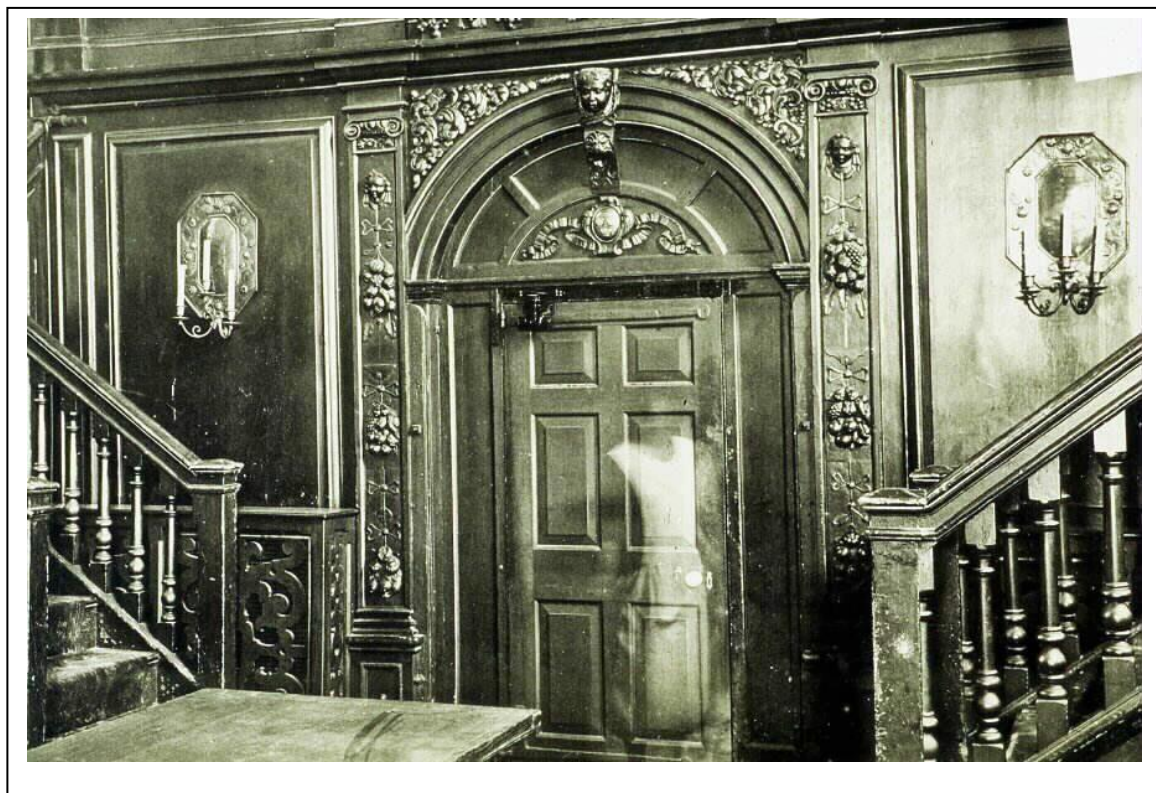


Cambridgeshire Ghosts Scrapbook 1897 to 1990:

Facts, Features and (occasional) Fallacies reported in Cambridge Newspapers



Summarised by
Mike Petty
7th July 2018

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Many of these stories were featured in my 'Looking Back' column in the Cambridge News from 1996-2014. They are supplemented by some selections 'From our Old Files' published in the Cambridge Independent Press and other notes.

I have digital and other copies of most of the stories summarised.
Many are on Flickr - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/153171359@N04/albums>

The original volumes are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library where there are many other indexes dating back to 1770.
They also have detailed newspaper cuttings files on over 750 topics that have been compiled since the 1960s.

Other 'Scrapbooks' are available at [bit.ly/CambsCollection](https://archive.org/search.php?query=creator%3A%22Mike%20Petty%22)
<https://archive.org/search.php?query=creator%3A%22Mike%20Petty%22>

Newspapers sometimes get things wrong. I copy things out incorrectly. Do check

There are a multitude of spelling and layout errors. Please forgive or correct them

News never stops but this file was finished on 31 August 2016.

I will maintain supplements and corrections – contact me for anything you need

Please make what use of these notes that you may. Kindly remember where they came from

Mike Petty, Stretham
2018

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1897 05 08

Fen ghosts, p3 *

1899 03 06

Brampton ghostly sight, p3 *

1899 06 23

P.C. Hills said his attention was called to a disturbance in Bull Lane, **Ely**. The defendant was raving about a ghost and saying there were about 200 people in the lane, but witness could see no one in the street beside themselves. There were several looking out at the windows. Defendant was using obscene language to his wife who was in the house and witness had to take him into custody. Defendant said: "The policeman asked me about the ghost and I told him it woke my children up. I had to sit up in the front of my own house till three o'clock in the morning"

1900

1901 01 03

The visit of a 'ghost' to the cottages of **Steeple Morden**, known as 'Moco' and occupied by a gamekeeper and his wife and a shepherd, has caused a great sensation in the village. A fortnight ago the gamekeeper heard strange noises, as from a person in agony, emanate from the party wall. He then heard a thud and the firing of a gun in one corner of their room. It is stated that one if not two murders were perpetrated at this place many years ago.

1902 11 12

W.B. Redfern told Cambridge Photographic Club that he remembered a man standing at the corner of Parker's Piece taking photographs of a most ghastly character. At the time they thought they were works of art. Many of them were daguerreotypes and they saw a sort of ghost of themselves. Now Cambridge had some of the best photographers in the kingdom. Mr F.J. Stoakley lectured on photography in natural colours and the Sanger Shepherd process.

1904 05 18

The placid life of **Linton** has been stirred by a rumour that the dead body of a pauper had been sold by the Master of the Workhouse to the Cambridge School of Anatomy. This was a perfectly lawful proceeding under the Anatomy Act which provides that the bodies of unclaimed paupers may be used for scientific study. The matter had been debated by the Board of Guardians who voted five for and five against but the Chairman declined to give the casting vote. The Master had taken it upon himself to send the body to Cambridge. But it was not 'sold

1904 12 24

Last term in the small hours of the morning an undergraduate in the old part of Corpus Christi College saw something of a supernatural appearance. It so unnerved him he became quite ill; he refused to continue to occupy the room and moved to another staircase. Naturally the college authorities deemed it desirable to prevent the story from gaining publicity and until now have succeeded in suppressing the circumstances. But now the harrowing and gruesome facts have leaked out and the recent visitation of 'something' to the undergraduate is beyond dispute. # 04 12 24

1906 01 27

Dr Hodgson former lecture psychical phenomenon America – spiritualism – 06 01 27b

1907 01 08

For many years a weird figure, clad in a red chintz dress, has haunted a farmhouse on the **Thorney** estate in the fens. During the creepy hours of the night it appeared in one particular bedroom and pointed a long, lean finger to a roof. Sometimes it made a rattling noise. Then it vanished. The house

was long occupied by the Caves, a noted fen family. Now a new tenant investigating the beams above the room has found secreted there the will of John Caves, made in 1797, relating to an estate worth about £10,000. Probably the mystic lady's perambulations will now cease 07 01 08

1907 09 05

A family has fled a two room, one up and one down, cottage in the parish of St Andrew-the-Less because of a supernatural visitation. Mysterious knockings come from beneath a truckle bed in which an eight-year old, named Rose, sleeps with another girl. People have tried to reproduce the noise by shaking the bed, stamping on the floor and striking the wall. The floorboards have also been taken up without result. Hard-headed men who pooh-poohed the story waited outside and distinctly heard the noises which only happen when Rose is in the bed, asleep. 07 09 05 & a

1907 09 07

The Cambridge 'ghost' has declined further manifestations for the delectation of hundreds of curious persons who, having discovered its situation, throng the narrow thoroughfare at all hours up to midnight. Neighbours discuss little else: Rose the girl at the centre of the disturbance, is the offspring of a former marriage, her mother having been married a second time. The theory is that the spirit of her deceased father is endeavouring to communicate with her, for monetary advantage

News reporters in the Cambridge 'haunted house' heard a 'thump-thump-thump' repeated twice. Had the spook obliged? Not a bit of it – the sound came from next door. Either the neighbour found a spot which required hammering or he thought he would reward the investigators with something to investigate. No noises have ever occurred after eleven o'clock so the pair packed up their paraphernalia and left without having heard anything more ghostly than the scratching of rats and mice. But outside the excitement remains as real as ever. 07 09 07 & a

Two CDN reporters waited for hours at the 'haunted cottage' with all the paraphernalia for bogus-spook-laying. News of the investigation had leaked out and the street was filled with men, women and children whose remarks were overheard by those behind the drawn blinds. Some agreed they were foolhardy and a bottle of brandy was a necessary item – but a spook-hunter is a teetotaler if he is wise. As the hours progressed the crowds melted away before the persuasions of the police. 07 09 07a

1907 12 28

Many recall the 'Knocking Ghost of **Barton**' when a succession of thumps were heard in a farmhouse and many a skilled ghost-layer were at their wits' end for an explanation. The real reason was hit upon by accident. Near at hand was a stable and beneath the floor was a disused iron pipe. When the horse kicked the sound was communicated to the house but so muffled and mysterious that no other cause than the supernatural was supposed. The Barton ghost had a good run before being run to earth. - 07 09 30awitchcraft – cure for horses who bewitched – horse had power of seeing ghosts – to cure it gather water from pools nearest the door of the stable, poured into an earthenware bottle with five nails from the shoes of the horse and a few other ingredients and cast upon the fire, muttering an incantation. When bottle burst farmer was affrightened at his own witchcraft and fled – 07 12 28 d & e

1910

1910 06 03

Willingham church tower is not haunted, although some people thought it was the other night. They heard some mysterious noises as though chains were being dragged along. They stood and wondered and shivered with fear. The noises ceased; then came a sound as of a door opening and closing, and the frightened group prepared to run away. Whilst they were hesitating the sexton came towards them and told them he had been winding the clock 10 06 03h

1912 02 02

Ghostly rappings on the back door of a cottage at **Tydd St Mary**, a village near Wisbech are causing great excitement. At first the noise was supposed to be the work of a practical joker, but constant watching disproved that theory. The noises occurred between nine in the morning and seven in the evening. On Wednesday fully 100 people assembled round the cottage and the noises were distinctly heard by all. The owner of the cottage has consulted two Wisbech spiritualists and nothing has been heard of the knocking since then. 12 02 02e

1912 10 18

Workmen digging at the rear of a shop in Peas Hill discovered the skeleton of a man and women, lying side by side. Nearby is the site of an old monastery and the assumption is that the remains were found in a former burying-ground. If so it knocks the bottom out of one of the best ghost stories in Cambridge, involving a wealthy banker whose young, beautiful wife took a lover who then disappeared. Half a body was later discovered in excavations at the Bijou Theatre Club's cellars. Now it appears they may all be linked. 12 10 18j

1915 01 16

Troops billeted Newmarket Road house find it haunted [3.5]

1920

1920 06 02

Christ's College 'ghost' walks; 'Christopher Round' captured and ducked in swimming pool – 20 06 02d

1928 01 30

The story of the Chesterton ghost has attracted crowds of people to the pathway skirting the Willows and there were quite 200 spook-hunters waiting for something to turn up. Of course nobody takes the story seriously and even children have braved the darkness and the barbed wire fences to join in the hunt. All sorts of practical jokes have been played and one enthusiast sallied forth with a sheet until people started throwing things! Someone said that the ghost was defunct, having been shot by a policeman. But if the spirit doesn't materialise on the Willows it most certainly will in a licensed establishment in the adjoining Cam Road

1930

1930 02 26

A woman was summoned for allowing a barn at **Fen Ditton** to be used for immoral purposes. She had converted it into a dance hall, teas were advertised and dances held. Det-Sergt Willis said he looked through the window and observed people inside. Some of the women attending were known to be of an undesirable character and the men mostly members of the University. The girls were dancing by themselves down the centre of the room holding up their dresses; another girl got on top of the piano and danced. Couples frequently left and went to a nearby cottage. Later the University Proctor arrived; he went to the dance room which was in darkness and by the light of his lamp could see four undergraduates and seven girls. They said they were telling ghost stories. 30 02 26a-d

1930 09 26

The Master of Clare College told librarians that a wealthy member of the college had made a benefaction on condition that his bones were preserved above ground. His body was put in a cupboard above the Hall. But undergraduates came to know of this and took away various bones as mementoes. The college replaced them with other bones so that skeleton remained more or less complete. But on Christmas Eve the ghost of the benefactor visits various undergraduate rooms gathering in his scattered parts. 30 09 26f

1932 11 30

Miser's ghost seen Magdalene Street 32 11 30 CIP of

1935 06 11

Catherine Parsons said people believed that midnight was the hour when ghosts would be seen. No one would pass the Roman road crossing to Streetley End for fear of being pelted with large things like apple dumplings. But **Horseheath** ghosts were quite harmless and included a poor girl whose coming was heralded by a sound like buzzing bees, three headless women dressed in black who wandered in from Camps and a headless man with a red handkerchief around his neck. The finest spectacle was a coffin borne up Limbery's Hill followed by a long procession of mourners. 35 06 11 & a

1937 10 08

In 1937 **Cottenham** lost one of its oldest properties: *A link with the historic past is being broken with the demolition of the 500-years-old Lordship House – Lordship Manor as it was called in the days of Samuel Pepys, the diarist. It has monastic associations and remains of fishponds can be seen in the vicinity. The last person of any importance to occupy the old Manor was a wealthy French lady, who used to live there periodically with her retinue, and during her stay she re-stocked the old fish ponds. Her ghost is supposed to haunt the house.* [CIP 8th October 1937]. In 1801 the Lordship Estate had been sold in plots and the house, yard and all the land fronting Lambs Lane was bought by Ellis Munsey, a Cottenham builder. He pulled down part of Lordship House and built several small cottages and the remaining part of the house was divided into three tenements but gradually fell into disrepair. [L. Milway, ed. Cottenham in focus. 2002]

1938 11 11

Undergraduates invaded the streets, skilfully extracting all the spare coppers with various ingenious stunts. In white sweaters and kilts of many clans the University Pipe Band paraded to Market Square for a display of Highland dancing, then toured public houses. The 'Peace Group' were perched on a cart disguised as a camouflaged tank decorated with "Atlee's pants" – which appeared to be pale pink in colour. Standing on the tank were two dictatorial-looking figures in uniform. Amongst the individual performers was a man on a pair of stilts made from skulls while barrel-organ players were dressed as ghosts 38 11 11

1940

1940 02 17

Pentacle Club 'ghost' appears – photo – 40 02 17

1950

1952 06 20

"**Madingley** Hall was acquired by Cambridge University at a ridiculously cheap price, cheaper than any building could have been got for helping to house a very overcrowded student population", Dr Raven, its warden, told visitors. "It did certainly not cost as much as £10,000. If you think of the sort of house you can get these days for £6,000 I think you will agree a house like this is pretty cheap at that price". It would have been criminal if the Hall had been allowed to fall into the hands of speculative builders. The University had first considered organising the great house at Audley End but had decided it was too far out of Cambridge. It was haunted by the ghost of Lady Holland who believed disaster had fallen upon her family as punishment for pulling down a church to build the house.

1952 11 17

A student occupying what is said to be a set of haunted rooms at Jesus College, Cambridge may have thought ghosts from distant lands had paid him a visit when he returned last Friday. During his absence a friend had taken some visitors from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos into the rooms and they were so delighted that they decided to leave a memento in the form of messages written in

Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian scripts – the last appears to be a work of art, looking slightly like Chinese script.

1954 01 29

It is possible that the bar floor of the Ferry Boat Inn at **Holywell** may be raised to find out whether a skeleton lies under it or not. Mr A.L. Cornell of the Society for Psychic Research wants to prove that he has had a conversation with a spirit who told him she was buried in a spot only a foot or so away from where the piano now stands in the bar. The alleged ghost is Juliet Tousley who makes an annual visit to the inn every March 17th, the day when in 1050 she committed suicide because she was jilted. She is said to be ‘perfectly happy’ to be buried in the pub and has no wish to be moved to consecrated ground.

1954 03 18

Eye-witness accounts of the Ferry Boat ghost at **Holywell** state that ‘some contact’ was made with the lady in white, named Juliet Tewslie. More than 400 people went down to the inn and hundreds were turned away. There were infra-red cameras in the bar, tape recorders to take down any noise and thermometers to check any sudden drop in temperature. After the hullabaloo of the sightseers had died down the Psychic Research Society’s team got down to serious work. They used an upturned glass on a smooth table which had letters of the alphabet on it. In answer to the question ‘Is anyone there?’ the glass spelled out ‘Juliet’. Asked when she had died she replied ‘515 years ago’. Thus it seems that the local legend that she died in 1050 was wrong.

1956 08 17

Tucked away in the bustling heart of **Histon** stands an enchanting medieval house steeped in history, and overrun with spirits. The ghosts of this quaint house include a debonair cavalier, a copper-haired Puritan, a malevolent Roundhead and a solemn but kindly priest. ‘We treat them like old friends’, says the lady of the house. 56 08 17 & a

1956 08 23

Histon ‘ghost’ story – 56 08 23a, 56 08 28 56 08 31b

1956 09 05

Histon ghost stories – letters – 56 09 05a & b

1958 02 26

Wamil Hall which stands beside the River Lark at **Mildenhall** was badly damaged by fire. About two thirds of the building was destroyed. A Newmarket fire engine equipped with skid chains completed the journey in 15 minutes, a remarkable feat in view of the state of the roads to this isolated spot. The Hall contains a secret passage and a ‘ghost-walk’. ‘Old Lady Rainbow’ haunts the house and neighbouring plantations. It was built about 1570 and has suffered other disastrous fires in 1895 and 1912. 58 02 26a

1960s The Cambridgeshire Collection has newspaper cuttings files from this date

1960

1960 01 06

Candy Scott has made quite a name for herself as a dancer, actress and model. Now, at 20, she has taken on a new role – ghost-hunter. She spent a night at medieval **Sawston** Hall, sleeping in the same great four-poster bed in the same tapestried room used by Mary Tudor – ‘Bloody Mary’ – more than 400 years ago. According to spine-chilling tales told by many reliable witnesses Mary still visits the room in the dark, dead hours before dawn. Candy never saw her but says many other strange things happened during the night – icy winds, odd noises and doors opening and closing. 60 01 06

1960 04 08

Histon haunted house home of D.A. Dale 60 04 08a

1961 04 14

Ghost hunters will investigate a small house in Staffordshire Gardens although the building is not haunted and is scheduled to be demolished. Tony Cornell of Girton, who travels all over the country investigating haunted houses, believes it is not spirits who throw things or cause the mysterious knockings which have driven people from their homes in fright. The effects may be caused by vibrations coming through the floor and up the walls. He will attach a 'vibration machine' to the wall and place ornaments on the floor and mantelpieces then conduct a scientific experiment to simulate the erratic wanderings of a poltergeist. 61 04 14a

1963 11 08

The landlady of the inn at **Caxton** Gibbet says the pub is haunted. A former innkeeper decided to rob three wealthy travellers during the night, but one woke so he killed them all and disposed of the bodies down the well from which the inn took its water supply. Footsteps are heard from the upstairs room to the trapdoor which still covers the well. At the Royal Oak in St Neots an unpleasant smell is believed to be the decaying corpse of a man who hanged himself from a meat-hook in a pantry. The body was not found for three days. 63 11 08a & b

1963 12 10

A.D. Cornell, an expert on extra-sensory perception, has spent 15 years seeking ghosts but has never actually seen one, though he has heard and felt them. He described many different local hauntings. Phantoms at first seemed so solid and real that you do not realise it is a ghost until the apparition gradually faded away. In the Victorian era with flickering candlelight and gas lamps people were more in tune with the unseen. But modern conditions with brilliant electric lights were not suitable for ghosts, he says 63 12 10a

1964 02 03

A railway porter and his family have lived at the 120-year-old **Newmarket** railway goods station for seven years. Their 10-roomed Victorian 'mansion' has a frontage of over 100ft and along its length are nine pairs of magnificent columns. It stands in its own grounds and costs £1.1s.4d. a week to rent. Inside offices have been converted into three bedrooms, a lounge, living room and kitchen. There is also a large cellar. But he would prefer to live in a small, comfortable, three-bedroomed house. "We are very lonely and have problems getting baby sitters because they think the place is haunted", he says. 64 02 03

1964 08 11

Charlie is tall with bushy sideboards, a stovepipe hat and a face resembling Abraham Lincoln. It is thought he was a schoolmaster at **Paxton** Hall who died many years ago. But it has become increasingly apparent that his ghost still haunts the old gate house. There is one bedroom which smells of stale cigars and no matter how hard the door is closed, it always opens again. The pet cat, on reaching the room, scampers down the stairs as fast as possible. Another cat jumps on the bed, purring loudly. But there is nothing there. 64 08 11

1968 09 02

Tony Cornell – a ghost-hunter's casebook: profile – 68 09 02

1970

1974 05 31

An alleged ghost, affectionately known as Fred, in a 17th-century building in **St Neots** town centre, is the subject of an intensive investigation by the Society for Psychical Research. The alleged apparition, said to be that of a man dressed in a three-cornered hat and wearing a cloak, has been reported twice in five years in the building. The owner of Carousel Restaurant called in experts because she wants

the matter cleared up. "My cook saw him. I'm not scared but I wouldn't like to see him suddenly", she said

1976 02 13

A village family, terrified by the ghost of a friend killed in a road accident, has called in the local vicar to help remove its presence. The wife says the poltergeist appeared at her home, tapped her on the shoulder, flung a cup to the floor, opened and shut an electric oven and sent the pet cat screeching from the kitchen. The spiritual visitor has frightened the couple and their five children so they called in the village vicar who said a prayer for the deceased. The presence has disappeared since the prayers were said.

1977 04 21

Cambridgeshire County Council could be saddled with an expensive white elephant if it ever decides to use **Whaddon** Gap, near Royston, as a permanent site for caravan-dwellers. They are usually very superstitious people and some believe the site is haunted. One woman who stayed there said there was a sort of smoky mist coming up and she smelled burning and heard a horrible scream. When the same thing happened the next night she packed up & left. Residents say a tramp's body was found in a dug-out in 1940 and several aircraft came down in the area during the war. A few years later a Canberra bomber crashed and the three-man crew were killed. Nine years ago a gypsy who was living there was brutally murdered and caravan dwellers have never been there since.

1977 08 17

Haverhill policemen are finding a night's duty at their station is not a happy one. Ghostly bumps and bangs are disturbing their midnight sojourns by the cells. Heavy doors, soundly locked, have been heard to slam. Even typewriters in empty offices have started a spirited chatter. The station in Camps Road was built on the site of a pagan Roman court. In 19th century excavations bodies of slaves were found bricked into the walls. Now the officers feel their new headquarters in Swann Lane cannot be completed soon enough.

1977 10 18

Undergraduates at Jesus College, Cambridge, are to keep watch in an ancient room for ghostly happenings on the night of All Souls. They will be on the look-out for the seven members of the college's reputed Everlasting Club, formed in 1738 which conferred eternal membership. Once a year the members promised to return to their original meeting room. But one by one they died. In 1766 the last surviving member sat down for annual celebration with six empty chairs for his deceased colleagues. From 10 until midnight there was a 'hideous uproar' in the room after which he was found dead.

1977 11 03

Ghostly members of the 300-year-old Cambridge Everlasting Club failed to make their appearance at midnight despite a vigil by Jesus College students. More than a dozen undergraduates gathered in a room at the top of an ancient staircase to wait for the annual reunion of the club which claimed to confer eternal membership on those invited to join it. All members of the club are reputed to have met grisly deaths and the room was sealed for many years as a result. Last night the student occupant invited fellow members of the Jesus Old Contemptibles dining club to join him for drinks but nothing happened despite the consumption of bottles of port.

1978 04 20

Eerie midnight howling is haunting the **Caxton** Gibbet Hotel – but the spine-chilling sounds are very real. They come from a homeless dog which has been roaming the district for about four years, ever since it was abandoned near the Gibbet Hotel. The elusive creature, a greyhound, has been christened Queenie. "It comes here most nights at about 12.30 and howls away at the front of the pub", said Mrs Mavis Spencer, the landlady. "I leave food for it each night and we turn out the lights and watch as it grabs a piece, runs off to eat it, then comes back for more"

1980

1980 02 09

A dark spectre with a high collar and spiky hair has been terrifying staff at the Oyster Tavern in Northampton Street, Cambridge. The ghost has been seen twice in three weeks in the pub's downstairs bar by the manager's wife and a barmaid. They saw the figure standing in the middle of the bar about midnight; it did not move and they could not see any details of its clothes. The bar is the oldest part of the building and used to be a grocer's shop. There has been a history of strange happenings at the pub but they are not planning to have the ghost exorcised as it seems quite friendly. 80 02 09

1980 12 24

Weird ghosts of **Madingley** Hall – 80 12 24 & a & c

1982 07 16

An Aladdin's cave of curious dusty lots comes under the hammer as former stage props are auctioned off at the old Festival Theatre in Newmarket Road, Cambridge. There's a glorious throne, the prow of a sailing ship and a pair of giant Corinthian columns, most of which have appeared at the Arts Theatre, which owns the building. It is said the Festival has a ghost – an old woman who was brought in to die after being run down by a horse and cart which bolted when delivering scenery. Dame Flora Robson wrote of meeting her. 82 07 16

1985 06 10

'Haunted' hearse catches fire – 85 06 10a

1987 10 02

There is a distinct shortage of spooky hauntings in Cambridge at the moment and the Cambridge University Society for Psychical Research is keen to carry out detailed experiments into the eerie and unexplained. A few years ago a young girl got lost while out with her parents on the Gogs where archaeologists were excavating Roman artefacts. When found, she told them she had been speaking to a Roman soldier. An expert interviewed her and admitted she gave an exact description of a soldier from those times, yet the girl knew nothing about that period in history. What was the girl seeing and in which language was she communicating? The Society hope the family will contact them 87 10 02a

1989 10 13

As a schoolboy, Cambridge ghost hunter Tony Cornell set out to prove that science could explain ghosts and other psychic phenomena. But over half a century later he has changed into a believer. "I have come across a lot of fraud, and a lot of wishful thinking, but when you strip that away, there is still a hard core of things which cannot be explained", he says. Tony has yet to see a ghost but has experienced other things which would make most people's hair stand on end which he will document in a forthcoming book 89 10 13a